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CUTTING BOARD WITH KNIFE SHARPENER

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PRIORITY CLAIM

This application claims the benefit of provisional application Serial Number 60/459,658, filed April 1, 2003.

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FIELD OF THE INVENTION

This invention relates generally to cutting boards and knife sharpeners, including a cutting board having an integral knife sharpener.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Knives and cutting boards are perhaps the most frequently used products in food preparation. Though knives and cutting boards are separate items, they are used together. Over time, knives become dull and must be sharpened. The best way to maintain a sharp knife blade is to hone the edges at frequent intervals. Maintaining a sharp edge requires less time and effort than restoring a cutting edge that has become dull.

There are many existing knife sharpeners on the market with a wide range of quality, cost, and effectiveness. One problem with existing sharpeners is that they are stand-alone devices that are usually stored in drawers, cupboards or knife blocks. Because they are stored

separately, the sharpeners are often forgotten or misplaced and not used. Accordingly, there is a need for an improved knife sharpener that is readily available each time a cutting board is used.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

5 The preferred and alternative embodiments of the present invention are described in detail below with reference to the following drawings.

FIGURE 1 is a perspective view of a preferred cutting board with knife sharpener;

FIGURE 2 is a front view of a preferred cutting board with knife sharpener;

FIGURE 3 is a top view of a preferred cutting board with knife sharpener;

10 FIGURE 4 is a bottom view of a preferred cutting board with knife sharpener;

FIGURE 5 is a perspective view of a knife being sharpened with the knife sharpener on the preferred cutting board with knife sharpener;

FIGURE 6 is a perspective view of a preferred bottom cap and ceramic rods; and

15 FIGURE 7 is a perspective bottom view of a preferred cutting board, indicating holes to receive the ceramic rods and a groove to receive the bottom cap.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

The preferred embodiment of the cutting board having an integrated knife sharpener consists of five principal parts, shown in the various drawings: the cutting board 10, sharpener housing 20, two sharpening rods 30, 40, and a bottom cover 50.

20 The cutting board 10 is preferably made from white polyethylene and measures 12.5 inches x 12.5 inches x 0.5 inches. The surface of the board is lightly textured to add grip. Any other suitable material may be used for the cutting board 10, such as wood, laminate, or solid surface materials like Corian.[®] Likewise, though the preferred cutting board is square it may alternatively be any shape such as rectangular, oval, or others. It may
25 also be larger or smaller, consistent with this invention.

The sharpener housing 20 is also constructed from polyethylene. It may alternatively be constructed from other materials such as nylon, other plastics, wood, or metal. The sharpener housing is over-molded onto the cutting board, forming the cutting board 10 first, then adding the material to form the sharpener housing 20 so that it is integrally joined to form a single device. The sharpener housing may alternatively be formed separately and then secured to the cutting board, for example by gluing, heat bonding, or other means.

In the preferred form, the sharpener housing is molded in dark gray polyethylene to visibly contrast with the white cutting board and to draw attention to the knife sharpener. Other colors may be used to provide the desired contrast. Similarly, the sharpener housing may be the same color as the cutting board 10, or may be white while the cutting board is formed in a contrasting color.

After forming the cutting board 10 and sharpener housing 20, a notch 22 is formed in the top of the sharpener housing 20. The notch is generally V-shaped, forming an approximately 40 degree angle at the corner of the cutting board. At the bottom of the sharpener housing, (see FIGURE 7) two holes 70, 72 are drilled to a depth that extends into but preferably not fully through the board. The holes are drilled along lines such that the holes form an angle that is approximately the same as that of the V-shaped sharpening notch. Each of the ceramic sharpening rods 30, 40 are formed from black ceramic (though other colors are also suitable) and are press-fit into the holes to form the sharpening surface. While ceramic is a preferred material for the sharpening rods, other sharpening materials may also be used.

A bottom cover 50 (see FIGURE 6) is formed from a dark gray polyethylene disk. As with the cutting board and sharpener housing, other materials and colors may be used. A corresponding circular disk-shaped groove 80 (see FIGURE 7) is formed in the bottom of the sharpener housing 20, either during the molding process or by removing material after molding. The cover 50 is then press-fit into the bottom side of the sharpener housing to

conceal the ends of the ceramic sharpening rods and permanently secure them within the holes. The cap preferably includes a number of detents 52 that mate with corresponding slots at the bottom of the cap-receiving groove.

Referring to FIGURE 5, a knife 60 is shown being sharpened. In order to sharpen the knife, the position the board 10 so the sharpener is located near the edge of the countertop and secure the cutting board with one hand while sharpening. Gently set the knife blade into the groove formed between the sharpening rods and pull it through the sharpener and away from your body, in the direction of the arrow. The blade should be held vertically and steadily while pulling it through the sharpener, so that the blade will not wobble side to side while sharpening.

The knife sharpener of the present invention provides many advantages. The knife sharpener is attached to the cutting board making it easy and convenient to use the sharpener at frequent intervals. The sharpener can be used at any time, even when foods are already on the board. The sharpener is positioned at the corner of the cutting board making it equally accessible for right and left handed users.

While the preferred embodiment of the invention has been illustrated and described, as noted above, many changes can be made without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention. Accordingly, the scope of the invention is not limited by the disclosure of the preferred embodiment.